

(Please silence all cell-phones & digital devices until after the Service! Thank you.)

PRELUDE – Noel IX

Louis-Claude Daquin (1694-1772)

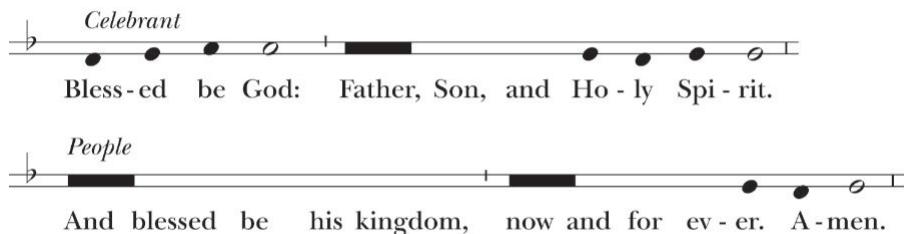
THE ENTRANCE RITE

PROCESSIONAL HYMN – #93 “Angels, from the realms of glory”

Regent Square

THE OPENING ACCLAMATION

S76



THE COLLECT FOR PURITY

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

GLORIA

Mass for the Nativity - Richard Shephard (1949-2021)

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

The Celebrant says to the people

The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Celebrant: Let us pray.

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

THE WORD OF GOD

THE FIRST READING

Jeremiah 31:7-14

Reader A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.

Thus says the Lord:

Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;
proclaim, give praise, and say,
"Save, O Lord, your people,
the remnant of Israel."
See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north,
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
among them the blind and the lame, those with child and
those in labor, together;
a great company, they shall return here.
With weeping they shall come,
and with consolations I will lead them back,
I will let them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;
for I have become a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my firstborn.
Hear the word of the Lord, O nations,
and declare it in the coastlands far away;

say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him,
and will keep him as a shepherd a flock."
For the Lord has ransomed Jacob,
and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.
They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord,
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and over the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall become like a watered garden,
and they shall never languish again.
Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.
I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.
I will give the priests their fill of fatness,
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty,
says the Lord.

Reader The Word of the Lord
People **Thanks be to God**

PSALM 84 – *Read at 8AM; chanted by the choir at 10:15* Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848-1918)

- 1 How dear to me is your dwelling, O Lord of hosts! *
My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.
- 2 **The sparrow has found her a house
and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; *
by the side of your altars, O Lord of hosts,
my King and my God.**
- 3 Happy are they who dwell in your house! *
they will always be praising you.
- 4 **Happy are the people whose strength is in you! *
whose hearts are set on the pilgrims' way.**
- 5 Those who go through the desolate valley will find it a place of springs, *
for the early rains have covered it with pools of water.
- 6 **They will climb from height to height, *
and the God of gods will reveal himself in Zion.**
- 7 Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; *
hearken, O God of Jacob.

- 8 **Behold our defender, O God; ***
 and look upon the face of your Anointed.
- 9 For one day in your courts is better than a thousand in my own room, *
 and to stand at the threshold of the house of my God
 than to dwell in the tents of the wicked.
- 10 **For the Lord God is both sun and shield; ***
 he will give grace and glory;
- 11 No good thing will the Lord withhold *
 from those who walk with integrity.
- 12 **O Lord of hosts, ***
 happy are they who put their trust in you!

THE EPISTLE

Ephesians 1:3-6,15-19a

Reader A reading from the Letter to the Ephesians.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe.

Reader The Word of the Lord
People **Thanks be to God**

THE SEQUENCE HYMN

#86 "When Christ's appearing was made known"

Gonfalon Royal

THE GOSPEL

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Then, all standing, the Deacon or a Priest reads the Gospel, first saying

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

After the wise men had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazorean."

Reader The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise to you, Lord Christ**

THE SERMON

The Very Reverend Rebecca A. Barnes

THE NICENE CREED – Spoken; All Stand, as able

BCP page 358

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:

by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Intercessor In this New Year let us bless God for the gift of salvation and offer prayers for the church and for the world, saying: ***Glory and praise to you, O living God.***

For the Church: especially Sarah, Archbishop of Canterbury-elect; Sean, our Presiding Bishop; Stephen our Bishop Provisional, and our Diocese as we prayerfully discern the calling of a new Bishop Diocesan, that through us God's light may shine forth on all who live in darkness, confusion, and fear. ***Glory and praise to you, O living God.***

For this Cathedral community, that we may welcome all those whom God leads to us, and be blessed through the diverse gifts and talents which they bring.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For all who live and work in places of danger, that the Prince of Peace may lead all who are the children of the one God to seek peace and justice.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For all who are traveling, and away from home, especially those in the military, that like the Shepherds and the Magi, God will guide their footsteps and bring them in safety to the place where they would be. ***Glory and praise to you, O living God.***

For hope in the face of fear and uncertainty, that we may be strengthened by God's promises and loving faithfulness. ***Glory and praise to you, O living God.***

For all who live in the shadows of fear, violence, and poverty, and those who are in need of our prayers, remembering especially, Alex, Deacon Pitcher, Lex, Sally, Clark, Geri, Dominic, Steve & Tracy, Lisa and family, Andrea, Larry and Diane, Byron, Chris, Joe, Carl, Lori, Larry, Carol, Renee, Sharon, Elaine, Anne, Jim, Judy, and Shirley, that in Christ they may find healing, hope, and peace. ***Glory and praise to you, O living God.***

For those who have died in this past year, that they may rejoice in the light of God's incarnate Word. ***Glory and praise to you, O living God.***

Lifting our voices with all creation, with Blessed Mary, the God-bearer; Blessed Joseph, Blessed Paul, and all the saints and angels, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. ***To you, O Lord our God.***

Celebrant O God of everlasting glory, accept the prayers we offer you in this joyful season, and grant that as we celebrate this mystery of your love, we may also delight in the joy that will be ours as children and heirs of your kingdom. Glory to you for ever and ever. ***Amen.***

CONFESSON OF SIN

The Deacon or Celebrant says

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Silence may be kept.

Minister and People

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

The Bishop, when present, or the Priest, stands and says

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. ***Amen.***

THE PEACE - All stand.

BCP page 360

Celebrant The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People ***And also with you.***

Then the Ministers and People may greet one another in the name of Jesus Christ.

THE HOLY COMMUNION

OFFERTORY SENTENCE

BCP page 358

Walk in Love, as Christ loved us and give himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God.

Representatives of the congregation bring the people's offerings of bread and wine, and money or other gifts, to the deacon or celebrant. The people stand while the offerings are presented and placed on the Altar.

OFFERTORY ANTHEM – The Blessed Son of God

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

The blessed son of God only
In a crib full poor did lie;
With our poor flesh and our poor blood
Was clothed that everlasting good
Kyrieleison

The Lord Christ Jesu, God's son dear
Was a guest and a stranger here;
Us for to bring from misery
That we might live eternally
Kyrieleison

All this did he for us freely
For to declare his great mercy;
All Christendom be merry therefore
And give him thanks for evermore
Kyrieleison

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

Eucharistic Prayer D

The Celebrant, whether bishop or priest, faces them and sings or says

SUBSUM CORDA

S120

Then, facing the Holy Table, the Celebrant proceeds

It is truly right to glorify you, Father, and to give you thanks; for you alone are God, living and true, dwelling in light inaccessible from before time and for ever.

Fountain of life and source of all goodness, you made all things and fill them with your blessing; you created them to rejoice in the splendor of your radiance.

Countless throngs of angels stand before you to serve you night and day; and, beholding the glory of your presence, they offer you unceasing praise. Joining with them, and giving voice to every creature under heaven, we acclaim you, and glorify your Name, as we sing,

THE SANCTUS

Shephard

Celebrant and People

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

The people stand or kneel.

Then the Celebrant continues

We acclaim you, holy Lord, glorious in power. Your mighty works reveal your wisdom and love. You formed us in your own image, giving the whole world into our care, so that, in obedience to you, our Creator, we might rule and serve all your creatures. When our disobedience took us far from you, you did not abandon us to the power of death. In your mercy you came to our help, so that in seeking you we might find you. Again and again you called us into covenant with you, and through the prophets you taught us to hope for salvation.

Father, you loved the world so much that in the fullness of time you sent your only Son to be our Savior. Incarnate by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, he lived as one of us, yet without sin. To the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation; to prisoners, freedom; to the sorrowful, joy. To fulfill your purpose he gave himself up to death; and, rising from the grave, destroyed death, and made the whole creation new.

And, that we might live no longer for ourselves, but for him who died and rose for us, he sent the Holy Spirit, his own first gift for those who believe, to complete his work in the world, and to bring to fulfillment the sanctification of all.

At the following words concerning the bread, the Celebrant is to hold it, or lay a hand upon

it, and at the words concerning the cup, to hold or place a hand upon the cup and any other vessel containing wine to be consecrated.

When the hour had come for him to be glorified by you, his heavenly Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end; at supper with them he took bread, and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Father, we now celebrate this memorial of our redemption. Recalling Christ's death and his descent among the dead, proclaiming his resurrection and ascension to your right hand, awaiting his coming in glory; and offering to you, from the gifts you have given us, this bread and this cup, we praise you and we bless you.

THE MEMORIAL ACCLIMATION

S140

We praise you, we bless you, we give thanks
to you, and we pray to you, Lord our God.

The Celebrant continues

Lord, we pray that in your goodness and mercy your Holy Spirit may descend upon us, and upon these gifts, sanctifying them and showing them to be holy gifts for your holy people, the bread of life and the cup of salvation, the Body and Blood of your Son Jesus Christ.

Grant that all who share this bread and cup may become one body and one spirit, a living sacrifice in Christ, to the praise of your Name.

Remember, Lord, your one holy catholic and apostolic Church, redeemed by the blood of your Christ. Reveal its unity, guard its faith, and preserve it in peace.

Remember all your people, and those who seek your truth. Remember all who have died in the peace of Christ, and those whose faith is known to you alone; bring them into the place of eternal joy and light.

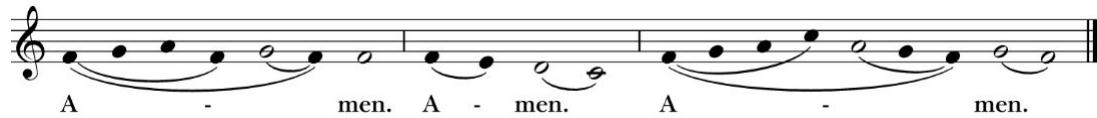
And grant that we may find our inheritance with the Blessed Virgin Mary, with patriarchs,

prophets, apostles, and martyrs, with Blessed Paul and all the saints who have found favor with you in ages past. We praise you in union with them and give you glory through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ, all honor and glory are yours, Almighty God and Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever.

THE GREAT AMEN

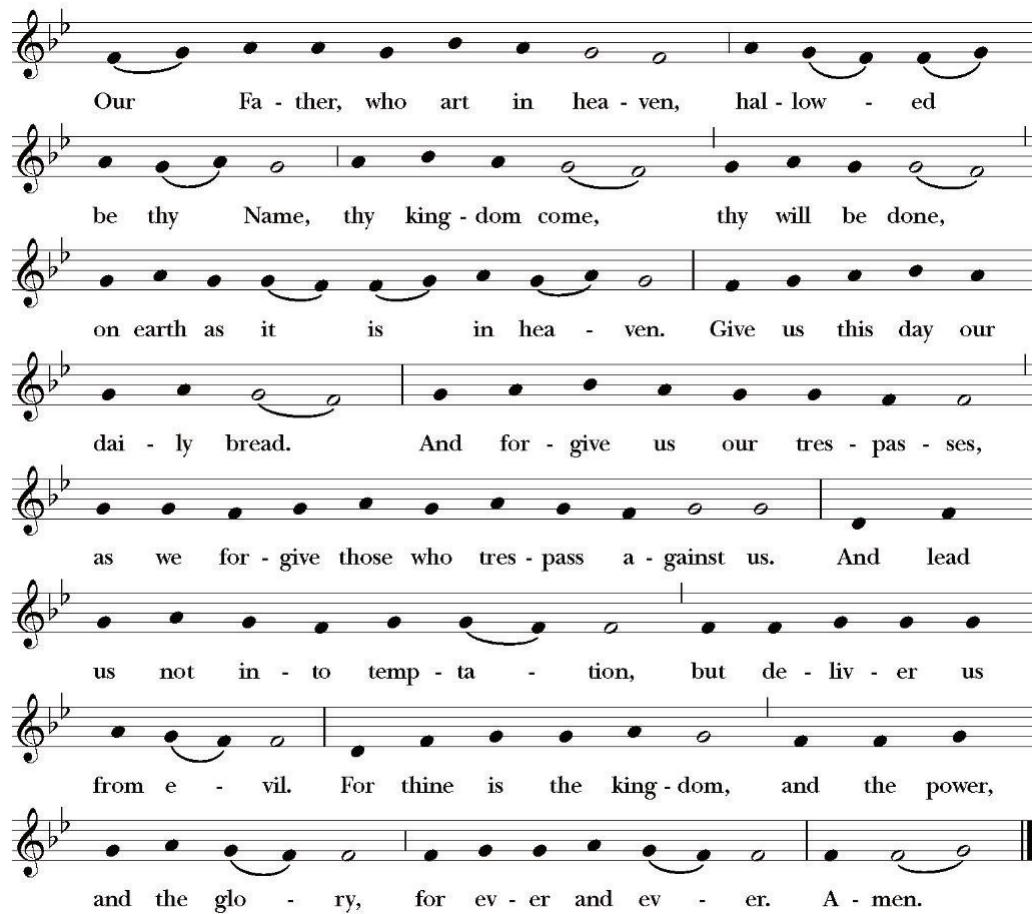
S143



And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

THE LORD'S PRAYER

S119



THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

BCP page 364

Celebrant Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us,

People **Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.**

THE FRACTION ANTHEM

Shephard

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world:
grant us peace.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

BCP page 364

The Celebrant says

The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

We welcome all baptized persons, regardless of age or denomination, to receive communion here at Saint Paul's. If you do not wish to receive communion, we invite you to come forward to a blessing. To show that you wish to receive a blessing, please cross your arms across your chest.

COMMUNION ANTHEM – Ave Verum Corpus

W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)

Ave, verum corpus natum
de Maria Virgine:
vere passum, immolatum
in cruce pro homine:
cuius latus perforatum
fluxit aqua et sanguine:
esto nobis praegustatum,
in mortis examine.

Hail the true body, born
of/from the Virgin Mary:
You who truly suffered and were sacrificed
on the cross for the sake of man.
From whose pierced flank
flowed water and blood:
Be a foretaste for us
in the trial of death.

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

BCP page 365

Let us pray.

Celebrant and People

Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

GREETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE BLESSING

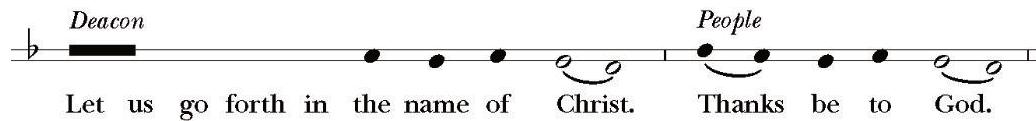
May Christ, who by his Incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with his joy and peace; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**

HYMN AT THE RETIRING PROCESSION – #109 “The First Noel”

The First Noel

DISMISSAL

S 174



POSTLUDE – Noel VIII

Louis-Claude Daquin (1694-1772)

CATHEDRAL LIFE I JANUARY 4
ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL – SPCBUFFALO.ORG

TODAY

- Bible Study – 9 a.m. lower level/Walker – coffee and discussion of scripture lessons for the week
- Coffee/Refreshments – after the 10:15 service, lower level/Walker

January 6 - Feast of the Epiphany, 6pm

Join us as we celebrate the arrival of the Magi and the manifestation of Christ to the peoples of the earth.

Christian Education and Formation at St. Paul's

Children's Christian Education: "Godly Play"

St. Paul's offers "Godly Play: is a Montessori-based program on Sundays at 10am in the Bishop Scaife Room on the lower level of the Cathedral. Making meaning through story, wonder, and play, the program nurtures spiritual lives by honoring the centrality, competency, and capacity of children.

Epiphany Centering Prayer Introductory Workshop

Centering Prayer is a receptive method of Christian silent prayer which deepens our relationship with God, the Indwelling Presence ... a prayer in which we can experience God's presence within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than consciousness itself. This method of prayer is both a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship. A Centering Prayer Introductory workshop will be offered throughout the season of Epiphany beginning with a workshop on Saturday, January 10, 2026 from 10am - 3pm. Follow-up sessions designed for ongoing learning and group spiritual support will be held on January 17, 24, 31, February 7, and 14. The workshop will be by The Very Rev'd Rebecca Barnes, Dean, who is a commissioned presenter and facilitator trainer with Contemplative Outreach, Ltd.

Lent 2026 – Bible Study on the Gospel of John

More details will be available soon.

SAVE THE DATE: The Psychology of Christian Nationalism with The Rev. Dr. Pamela Cooper-White, Saturday, April 18, 2026

How do we overcome polarization in American society? How do we advocate for justice when one side won't listen to the other and cycles of outrage escalate? How do we talk with each other when people of different perspectives are seen as evil, immoral, or anti-American? Dr.

Pamela Cooper-White has written a book entitled "The Psychology of Christian Nationalism: Why People Are Drawn In and How to Talk Across the Divide". To read more about her, see her bio here www.linkedin.com/in/pamelacooperwhite

Dr. Cooper-White will address this topic at Holy Trinity on Saturday, April 18, 2026. She will also preach at St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral on Sunday, April 19, 2026. Save these dates. More details will be available soon.

This event is sponsored by: Episcopal Diocese of WNY; Upstate NY Synod of the Lutheran Church in America; St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Buffalo; Holy Trinity Lutheran Church - Buffalo, NY.

An SJAT Note for Epiphany gifts to Garden of Love patrons

From Kim Goodman and Bob Ludwig for the Social Justice Action Team

Wrapping up our Epiphany Gift Drive to Garden of Love patrons. Yes, the donation drive ends on Sunday, January 4. And, also, yes, after the 10:15 service on Sunday, stay to wrap the presents. In the Walker Room we will have wrapping paper and tape.

Our Winter Kit attached to each Lunch during Epiphany week includes:

Hand warmers, chapstick, tissue pack, hard candies and hand lotion. A sample kit is in the Narthex.

We are mostly in need of hand or toe warmers to complete our kits. In addition, we continue to hand out Hats, Mittens and Neck Gaiters to help our guests keep warm. Bring items and checks Jan 4th.

For patrons who go to the Thursday Art class, contributions of sketchbooks, drawing pencils, non-plastic-reusable water bottles for use in the Ministry Center would also be welcome. Talk to Kim or Bob who will be roaming about. Financial gifts accepted for SJAT to shop are welcome also.

Thanks to you for all the contributions!!

Prayer and Pastoral Care

We lift up the following in prayer especially Alex, Deacon Pitcher, Lex, Sally, Clark, Geri, Dominic, Steve & Tracy, Lisa and family, Andrea, Larry and Diane, Byron, Chris, Joe, Carl, Lori, Larry, Carol, Renee, Sharon, Elaine, Anne, Jim, Judy, and Shirley. We also remember all those who have died, especially Juanita, Barbara, George, Don, Michelle, and those whose anniversaries of death we mark this week. We pray for them and their loved ones who remember them.

ACROSS THE DIOCESE AND THE CHURCH

Flu Season Reminder

The flu season is upon us, and where I live in Monroe County, the flu has increased by 200% in just one week. That's probably the result of Thanksgiving travel. As you wrestle with the flu in your communities, I remind you of some of the protocols that we use to keep people safe.

People may wear masks, and you may want to encourage that for folks with special vulnerabilities.

It's also appropriate to take communion in one kind, that is, bread. That's full communion. I do that.

You may also want to encourage folks who aren't feeling well to stay home and to watch your online service.

We've learned a lot since the onslaught of COVID. Let's put our learning to use for the safety of our communities.

Bishop Steve

2025 CHRISTMAS FLOWER DONATIONS

Updated 12/24

In Memory of

Evelyn Kinder Rundle, Caroline Smigelsky, Lori Smigelsky, Daniel Maunz
– Given by Frank and Evelyn Smigelsky

Melvin and Marion Elliott, Richard Elliott, Barbara King, Marion Esther Elliott, The Rev. Ronald Forsyth, Dr. Carl E. Day, Spencer and Mollie Elliott
– Given by Judy Elliott

Lois Jeffery
– Given by Gary Jeffery

Ramon and Norma Bonilla, Michael & Mary Bracken, Lucille Eleanor Foster and Robert C. Bonilla – Given by Michael Bonilla

Tabatha Clark and Almira Zahir
– Given by Kathy Reiss

Brady Family, Cesana Family
– Given by Tish Brady and Paul Cesana

Carol and John Goodman
– Given by The Goodman Family

The Chaloner Family, The Castellini Family, John Wallace MacLean
– Given by The Corwins

Larry Neely, Jr. and Larry Neely, Sr.
– Given by Latanya Jacob

Thomas L. Prue (Sexton 1973 – 1982)
– Given by Frank M. Hamman

Timothy Schreier, Bill Schreier
– Given by Elizabeth Schreier

Johnny Dan
– Given by Andy Newbert

Doug Milander
– Given by Delwyn Milander

**Dettra Giles-Jemmott, Juanita Hayes, Mildred Jemmott, Earlene Jemmott,
Jonathan Cooper, Ida Jemmott-Cooper**
– Given by David Jemmott

Nancy Skinner, Joyce Laubach
– Given by Dorothy Pope

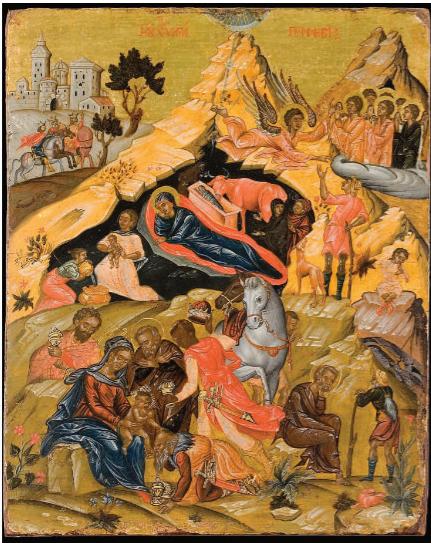
To the Glory of God and in Loving Memory of

Those We Love but See No More
– Given by The Very Rev. Rebecca Barnes and The Rev. Elizabeth Grohowski

To the Glory of God and In Thanksgiving For

The Cathedral Choir and Patricia Hills
– Given by Michael Bonilla

For our family and many blessings
– Given by The Rev. and Mrs. Earle King



Christmas message from Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe

December 23, 2025

Office of Public Affairs

Dear people of God in The Episcopal Church,

If you imagine yourself as a character in the Gospel Nativity readings, you'll soon realize that the first Christmas was not about staying home by a warm hearth with chestnuts roasting and stockings hanging. Everyone in these passages is on the move, mostly without warning and against their will. Joseph and Mary are summoned from Nazareth to Bethlehem for a census. Shepherds, at the behest of an angel, leave their sheep in the fields to see what all the fuss is about. And the three Magi, my favorites, are just sitting there minding their own kingdoms when a star intrudes on their lives and leads them on an unplanned and uncomfortable trip far away from home.

The Anglican poet T.S. Eliot [wrote a poem](#) about that arduous journey from the perspective of one of the Magi, recounting, among other things, the difficulty of getting camels to do as they are told. The three kings' encounter with the newborn son of God was hard, disruptive, and unsettling. And when they returned home—by a different road to elude capture by Herod—it no longer felt like home. In Eliot's retelling, the first Christmas turned the Magi's lives upside down, and they had mixed feelings about the whole experience.

You might be greeting Christmas this year with the awe of the shepherds or the wariness of the Magi. Either way, the Gospel reminds us that Jesus came both to experience all of the joy, uncertainty, and brokenness of our humanity, and to bring God's kingdom near. The birth of the Christ Child heralds a new reality in which the last shall be first, the hungry will be fed, and the stranger among us shall be welcomed as a beloved child of God.

This Christmas, I hope that you will join me in proclaiming these good tidings by supporting the most vulnerable among us with a donation to one of these Episcopal Church ministries:

Episcopal Migration Ministries, which works with dioceses and ministry networks to serve migrants and protect their rights.

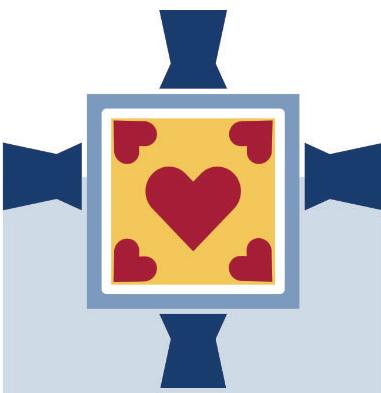
Good Friday Offering for the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East, which supports lifesaving ministry in Gaza and across the Holy Land.

Episcopal Relief & Development, which works for lasting change in communities affected by injustice, poverty, disaster, and climate change.

I am grateful to be on the journey of faith with you. May God bless you and all those you love this Christmas and always.

+ Sean

The Most Rev. Sean W. Rowe
Presiding Bishop
The Episcopal Church



Questions for Reflection:

How do you make room for the unexpected in your life? How does this create an awareness of Generosity for you?



J. Davey Gerhard is the Executive Director of TENS and believes in God's all-inclusive invitation

to find Love when we are gathered together. He lives, works, and worships in San Francisco, California.

Plenty Good Room

A Christmas Reflection

On Christmas Day, we gather to celebrate the astonishing truth that God's Word became flesh and made a home among us. In a manger – humble, crowded, unexpected – God revealed that there is plenty good room for all. The angels announced good news of great joy “for all people.” Shepherds left their flocks, wise travelers crossed borders, and Mary treasured each wonder in her heart.

The Spiritual Plenty Good Room echoes the song of that holy night: there is space enough in God's kingdom for every person, every story, every gift. The miracle of Christmas is not only that God came into the world, but that God came in a way that widened the circle of belonging. No palace gates, no locked doors, just an open stable, where all who were willing could draw near.

Christmas confronts our fears of not having enough. Scarcity told Bethlehem there was no room at the inn; yet God showed that even in a manger, grace overflows. Scarcity tells us our gifts are too small, our faith too weak, our offerings too limited. But God delights in what we bring – whether gold, frankincense, myrrh, or the simple generosity of hearts that say yes to love.

The Incarnation teaches us that God's abundance is not measured in wealth or grandeur, but in love that makes room. Christ is born not in seclusion but in solidarity, not for some but for all. This is the same abundance we are called to live into as stewards of the Church: making space, setting the table, sharing freely what God has given us.

As we kneel again at the manger, may we hear the invitation of both the Gospel and the song: “Just choose your seat and sit down.” Let us respond with joy, offering our prayers, our resources, and our lives so that our church may continue to proclaim Christ's welcome. There is plenty good room – for you, for me, for everyone who longs to encounter the living God.

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace to all on earth!” – Luke 2:14
TENS.org

New or visiting today? Everything you need to participate in worship is in this bulletin and the Hymnal in the pew (red or blue). We invite you to join in praying, singing, and responding, as you are comfortable.

Restrooms are located on the lower level. From the elevator, proceed through the double glass doors and look to your right for an accessible restroom. Additional restrooms are on the same level, to the left, near the kitchen.

Children are always welcome in worship and are invited to explore! Greeters can provide activity kits, available in the back of the church. Godly Play is also offered. For details: cathedral@spcbuffalo.org.

SERVING IN WORSHIP TODAY

Kathy Reiss, Delwyn Milander; Altar Guild

Frank Smigelsky, Robert Ludwig; Ushers

Patricia Hills; Coffee Hour Host

Thomas Heyer; Livestream Coordinator

Sean Harkin, Michael Bonilla, Roger Woodard; Readers

Sean Harkin, William Siener; Intercessors

Charles Casto Jr., Evelyn Smigelsky; Eucharistic Ministers

Andrew Jacob; Crucifer

Tim Socha; Guest Organist

The Very Reverend Rebecca A. Barnes; Celebrant and Preacher

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The people of St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral strive to be a beacon of God's love in Western New York through transformative worship, inclusive fellowship, and active service in partnership with the wider community.

ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL

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